

The QCAR Framework — aligning curriculum, assessment and reporting

The QCAR Framework aligns curriculum, assessment and reporting. It supports teaching that is tailored to meet the unique needs of students, by providing teachers with direction and valuable resources to support them in their everyday work. Rather than seeking “sameness”, it presents a way of achieving more commonality in what is taught, while supporting diversity in how it is taught.

The Framework supports teachers and schools in building a culture of “high expectations, engaged learning and focused teaching” (Hill, 2003). It helps teachers to plan and provide opportunities for students to experience rich and rewarding learning programs that have relevance and application in the real world. It also supports students to be active participants in their learning.

Focus of the Framework

The focus of the QCAR Framework is improvement. It is about improving:

- the clarity of key learning area (KLA) syllabus documents
- the consistency of what is taught across Queensland
- the capacity of teachers to assess and make informed judgments about student work against commonly applied standards
- the capacity of teachers to use information about student learning to inform future teaching programs
- the feedback given to students about their learning
- the comparability of student reports to parents and carers.

This focus supports a more robust, quality education system through enhanced consistency and coherence across all schools and year levels.

Components of the Framework

The QCAR Framework has five components that are interrelated and designed to work together. These align with, support, and are embedded in all elements of the teaching and learning process. They include:

- a set of **Essential Learnings** across all KLAs — these identify what should be taught and what is important for students to have opportunities to know and be able to do
- **Standards** for the *Essential Learnings* — these provide a common frame of reference and a shared language to describe student achievement



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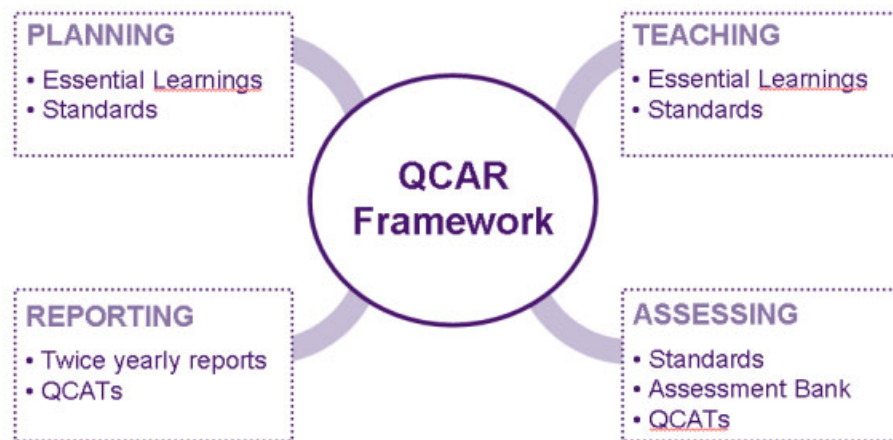
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- an online **Assessment Bank** — this will support the everyday assessment practices of teachers by providing access to a range of quality assessment tools
- **Queensland Comparable Assessment Tasks (QCATs)** in Years 4, 6 and 9 — these provide information to teachers about student demonstrations of learning in a selection of *Essential Learnings*, and promote consistency of teacher judgments
- **Guidelines for Reporting** — these support consistency of reporting across Queensland.

The QCAR Framework

Supporting learning



How was the QCAR Framework developed?

The Queensland Studies Authority (QSA) developed the Queensland Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting (QCAR) Framework in partnership with the Department of Education, Training and the Arts, Education Queensland, Queensland Catholic Education Commission and Independent Schools Queensland.

Schools drawn from the three schooling sectors worked with the QSA to trial and refine the Essential Learnings and Standards, Assessment Bank items, the QCATs and the *Guidelines for Reporting*. This ensured that expertise and advice from teachers informed the development of each component of the QCAR Framework.

What are the benefits for students?

The world is changing rapidly. Students need to have transferable knowledge, skills and capabilities to contribute meaningfully to the social, economic and cultural life of the community.

As well as encouraging the active involvement of students in their own learning, the QCAR Framework demonstrates how the elements of curriculum and assessment work together to promote improved student learning. It assists schools to deliver cohesive learning programs that ensure students achieve deeper levels of understanding in those aspects of curriculum that are really important for their future.

The Framework promotes greater consistency across classrooms. It also encourages greater continuity across year levels in what is taught in Queensland schools and how it is assessed and reported — a significant benefit for the 25 per cent of students who change schools each year.

Moreover, the Framework provides models of standards-referenced assessment that demonstrate the connections between what students are expected to know and do, and how their responses are judged to demonstrate the quality of their learning. This transparency gives teachers and students opportunities to engage in evidence-based discussions. These discussions can assist students to gain a better understanding of how to evaluate their own responses and achievements, and identify the learning experiences they need to progress their learning.

What are the benefits for teachers?

The QCAR Framework provides teachers with clarity about what to teach. It:

- informs planning, giving teachers the assurance that the essential elements of each KLA syllabus are included in curriculum programs, and that their students are learning what the community considers to be important
- helps teachers to develop a shared understanding about expectations for student performance as well as skills in using a common set of standards to describe the evidence in student work and inform judgments about the quality of student achievement
- offers access to quality assessments that can be used to collect evidence of student achievement
- provides a common frame of reference and a shared language with which to describe student achievement
- values teacher professionalism and supports professional learning
- enables teachers to maintain the flexibility of drawing on other resources to support student learning
- maintains Queensland's commitment to supporting school-based curriculum development with quality materials and advice.

What are the benefits for parents/carers?

At present, it can be difficult for parents/carers to understand reports on their child's level of achievement, and to know how they can help their child or when to seek extra support. The QCAR Framework will give parents/carers assurance that:

- the learning their child undertakes is consistent with that of other schools
- the judgments teachers make about their child's performance are made using the same Standards as those applied in other Queensland schools.

Developing consistency of teacher judgment will take time as students, teachers and parents/carers become familiar with the Standards.

Timelines

- The Essential Learnings and Standards are currently available on the QSA website.
- The online Assessment Bank will be available in mid-2008. A sample Assessment Bank package is available for viewing on the QSA website.
- An expanded trial of the QCATs will occur in September/October 2008. Schools will be invited to trial one QCAT. Sample QCAT packages are available for viewing on the QSA website.
- Implementation of QCATs for Years 4 and 6 in English, Mathematics and Science is scheduled for March/April 2009. Implementation of QCATs for Year 9 in English, Mathematics and Science is scheduled for September/October 2009.
- *Guidelines for Reporting* will be published in 2008.

References

Hill, P 2003, "Building High Capacity, Aligned Education Systems", paper presented to International Congress for School Effectiveness and Improvement, Sydney, 5–8 February.